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VOL. XVI.—No. 1.

NEW YORK, APRIL, 1890.

Per Annum, Four Dollars.  
Single Copies, 35 Cents.

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Entered at New York Post Office as Second Class Mail Matter.

## The Decorator and Furnisher.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT

150 Nassau Street, New York, by

THE ART-TRADES PUBLISHING AND PRINTING CO.,

W. M. HALSTED, President.

T. A. KENNETT, EDITOR.

W. P. WHEELER, BUSINESS MANAGER.

Subscription \$4 per year, in advance

(PATENT BINDER, \$1.00 EXTRA.)

Single Copies, - - - 35 Cents.

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BRUSHES make such a feature in the painter's and decorator's work that we briefly describe their manufacture. The best hairs and bristles come from northern regions—Siberia and Germany being the chief sources of supply. These are first sorted and dressed, or cleansed in soap and water. The workman then takes a handful of bristles and runs them through an upright comb several times. This causes them to be "turned over" each time, and the hairs are equally distributed through each lot. Then comes the process of dragging by means of a comb somewhat different, the teeth being adjusted to certain thicknesses of the bristles. The bristles are held by the workman lightly between two brush handles and dragged through the comb towards him. The thinner bristles come through whilst the thicker ones remain held by the teeth. This process is repeated until the bristles are separated into groups of varying strength. The finer ones alone are used for brush purposes. The subsequent operation is to weigh out the requisite quantity of bristles thus assorted for the different sizes of brushes. When this is done, each lot is laid separately on the bench for the operation of "making a knot." For this the hair is gathered up in one hand and with magician-like rapidity the knot is bound up ready for affixing to the stock or handle. After the knot of bristles is attached to the handle the brush is structurally complete.

WE notice a general improvement—that is to say, more decorative art in the designs of mosaic laid floors. Floors are important contributors to the *coup d'œil* of a hall, and so merit attention in this respect. Conventionalized flowers on a bold scale are taking the place of mere geometric dispositions of the cubes, and, in many instances, the borders of the panels in which they appear, are well set off as decorative adjuncts; the inner and outer lines being filled in with leaf-bearing stalks. Few colors are requisite for the center pieces, but in the filling in of the interspaces the utmost attainable diversity is allowable, and the more varied the shapes the better the effect of the contrast with the central design.

AS cut flowers aid so much in decoration, a mode of preserving them for a considerable period will be welcome, especially as by the process we are about to describe they lose neither beauty of tint nor form. Get a quantity of fine sand, was it until the last water that runs off is quite clear, then put



## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

the wet sand on a slanting board to drain. Dry the sand perfectly by the fire or in the sun. Sift it twice, once through a fine sieve. The flowers should be those cut in dry weather. Fill a box of sufficient size with sand so that the flowers may stand erect in it. Then put some sand in the sieve and shake it gently over them. The sand absorbs the moisture of the flowers. As soon as the flowers are thoroughly dry, open the box and stand it so as to let the upper sand run out gently; then lift them out by their stems. The flowers will be perfect, but a little brittle. In time the atmosphere will make them less so.

**A**MATEUR design painting for interior walls, ceilings, panels of doors and other woodwork is seldom practiced in this country by ladies, but it is otherwise abroad. The color decoration of portions of some of the finest mansions in England have been done by female artists. Now what does this work involve? The design has first to be planned or selected, then a rough sketch produced by a few charcoal scratches; next comes the working out of the design in detail consistently with the general form; both, though requiring thought and skill, can be accomplished with very moderate talent. The succeeding operation is to make what is technically called the pouncing, that is to prick the detailed drawing so that a little colored dust or charcoal may be rubbed on the lines, followed by markings with a leadpencil. Then comes the dead coloring, or the laying in of flat tints within the pencil markings, for which also only ordinary ability is required. It is otherwise with the forming of lights and shades, and the painting of flowers, birds and fruit, whilst figure centers afford a field for the highest talent. Such designs are infinitely above paper hangings as a style of high-class decoration. They have also the sanitary advantages of oil painting.

**W**E owe much to glazing in transparent colors for fine chromatic effects. As varnish is employed in the glazing color it asserts itself by this transparent medium, allowing of rays from the ground color to pass through. The glaze lies loosely, so to speak, on the surface, thus differing from an opaque and compact film. As a rule, the color to be glazed should be brighter than would otherwise be required, as the glazing will probably lower its degree of tone. To colors deficient in tone, glazing can give force and richness, and, on the other hand, can impart a certain degree of coldness to somewhat bright hues. Diluted transparent colors may be crimson, lake, scarlet, red, yellow, green or brown. Applied as enrichments on suitable grounds they are capable of producing an endless variety of effects.

**I**N addition to ground glass patterns for shades to electric and gas lights, colors which are so successfully applied to temper their brilliance in apartments, there is one mode for effecting this object, and diffusing a softer and more uniform and pleasing radiance, by introducing a second ceiling of wood-framed glass panels, having the light above, the panels being painted in transparent colors with flower and other designs, the gas fixtures or electric bulbs being above them. Ventilation could be supplied by orifices which would also admit heated and deteriorated air, whilst openings in the walls would allow of its escape, thus adding to the comfort and healthiness of the room. The scheme is somewhat expensive, but the large sums now spent on interior decoration would justify its introduction into our first-class residences. Apartments, as now built, have certainly sufficient height. Such ceilings are provided in the Houses of Lords and Commons in England, and every visitor is pleasingly impressed with the effect.

**O**NE of the most perfect examples of full colored decoration is St Mark's, at Venice. The damp salt air acting for so many centuries on its perishable parts has produced an effect almost like the bloom of a plum, and in parts a haze of greenish gold is produced by the distant mosaic, while the dust and the smoke from lamps and candles fixed by the damp have given such tone to the whole that no harshness of color betrays itself. Cross lights, too, come from behind ranges of columns throwing a slight glimmer on the polished surface, and countless reflections on the shining parts below producing an effect almost unrivalled.

**A** SMOOTH floor may be stained a rich dark brown by the use of one pound of asphaltum mixed with a half pound of beeswax, or a greater quantity of each in the same proportion. If the composition is judged too light, additional asphaltum may be cautiously added. This is applied with a sponge or brush. A thin coat of shellac is then laid over the whole, and the surface smoothed with sand paper. A coat of common varnish will give it a splendid finish.

**T**HERE was an honesty of purpose in the old art workers who never swerved from a leading principle, and hence the educated eye distinguishes a piece of genuine antique decorated furniture from pseudo imitations. Articles of genuine old-work are becoming increasingly scanty. The abundance which Wardour Street, London, offers of so-called antique furniture consists of ingenious adaptations of fragments of old work pieced and placed together, often ludicrous in their association, bits of different periods and styles being brought together only a quarter of a century ago. Bowen, the former Norman capital, was a mine of wealth for furniture seekers. Its stately ancient houses, now swept away, contained besides, elaborately carved panels and wonderful wooden chimney pieces. A like opportunity of gathering freely in antique furniture may be looked for in vain.

**T**HE simpler the design of a piece of furniture, the greater the necessity of so proportioning the parts as to render it beautiful. This due proportion is a subtle element, but when reached is a constant charm. All art begins in simplicity and advances to the decorative, but simplicity need not thus be foregone provided complexity is foregone—that complexity which has always attended the degeneration of art. The highest phase of simplicity is best evolved by the ornament being apparently evolved from the leading lines of the design, not excluding fanciful devices for the sake of mere enrichment in special portions as on the lower central panels and the architrave of a cabinet.

**I**T is always well, in face of facts, to moderate some of our claims to advanced art and be content with the function of revivalists. The ancients were adepts in the manufacture of glass, and although the moderns have produced a brilliancy never before attained, still in variety of make and skill in workmanship, the Greek and Roman artists of old maintain the first rank. Modern art has provided nothing superior to the celebrated Portland vase. Almost all the varieties of old Venetian glass appear to have been known to the ancients from whom through the Greeks of Byzantium the Venetians probably derived their knowledge.

**"I**N all arts," says a foreign journal, "smallness of parts gives littleness of style, and with a defect so radical the most expensive work is wasted." Not necessarily so, for all depends on the character of the design and the distribution of the detail. The Mohammedans were wont to coat their walls with minute ornament incised and in relief whilst securing at the same time breadth of effect and a pleasing general aspect. There are many details in decoration that look all the better for individual vagueness when they serve to fill in well defined outlines.

**A**LL processes adopted in fashioning and ornamenting the precious metals are of interest. We have inspected an ancient silver bowl from Siam having some appearance of niello-work, but differently wrought. It seems to be formed by the pattern being punched out from the inside, and the interstices on the outside filled up with the black lacquered ground, while the pattern seems to have been afterwards gilt.

**T**HE best mode of applying canvas to wall and ceiling panels as a ground for decorative painting is, first to paint it with a good body of white lead in oil. Whilst this coat is still tolerably fresh, a thick coat of white lead with a little gold size is to be laid on. Then, after painting the back of the canvas with white lead mixed with a little gold size, rub it well down.

**A**SSOCIATION has much to do with the pleasure at times derived from articles of furniture or bric-a-brac. A cabinet, for example, which recalls the time of Francis I., a vase that reminds us of Diana de Poitiers, a chair that possibly supported a Venetian Doge, a table bell that might have been tinkled by Madame de Medecis, affords through its suggestiveness a glamor of attractiveness independent of its character.

**A** DEVICE in the way of an intentional illusion consists in a cabinet recess lined with mirrors so adjusted as to reflect on each other and conceal an object placed within it except at certain angles viewed at a distance. The individual who has thus seen the vase or other article is surprised on a near approach to find it vanish, this affording in company much entertainment.